

Message Text

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44

ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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R 131403Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5831

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

AMEMBASSY TUNIS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 185

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

EXDIS

KUWAIT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ETRD, EGEN, PFOR, KU, SY

SUBJ: U.S. CONTACTS WITH BOYCOTT AUTHORITIES

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REF: 75 STATE 298989

1. SUMMARY: EMBASSY HAS ON OCCASION RAISED BOYCOTT-RELATED MATTERS WITH SARG AT MINISTERIAL LEVEL BUT HAS HAD NO CONTACT WITH SARG WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS WHO ADMINISTER BOYCOTT REGULATIONS OR WITH DAMASCUS-BASED ARAB CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE. RESULT HAS BEEN TO CUT OURSELVES OFF FROM MOST AUTHORITATIVE SOURCES OF BOYCOTT INFORMATION. IF DEPT BELIEVES INFO WHICH WE ARE GETTING FROM SECONDARY SOURCES IS INADEQUATE, EMBASSY SUGGESTS THAT FSL LOCAL EMPLOYEE (ECONOMIC-COMMERCIAL SPECIALIST) OR A LOCAL LAWYER COULD SEEK CONTACT WITH WORKING LEVEL OFFICIALS OF SARG AND ARAB BOYCOTT OFFICE FOR PURPOSE OF OBTAINING ACCURATE INFORMATION WITHOUT UNDERMINING U.S. POSITION OF NON-RECOGNITION OF ARAB BOYCOTT ITSELF. END SUMMARY.

2. VIEWED FROM DAMASCUS CONTACTS ON ARAB BOYCOTT ISSUES FALL INTO TWO CATAGORIES, THOSE WITH SARG AND THOSE WITH DAMASCUS BASED ARAB CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE. WITH REGARD TO SARG, EMBASSY HAS HAD THREE OCCASIONS SINCE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF RELATIONS IN JUNE 1974 TO RAISE BOYCOTT ISSUES: IN CONNECTION WITH RESUMPTION OF AID AND PL-480 PROGRAMS; UNDER INSTRUCTIONS FROM DEPT CONCERNING RCA-GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS AND IN CONNECTION WITH RECENT ANTI-BOYCOTT ACTIONS IN US.S.

3. IN EACH OF THESE INSTANCES, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO RAISE ISSUE WITH MINISTER OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE, MUHAMMED IMADI, WHO HAS CENTRAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR SYRIAN FOREIGN TRADE REGULATINS, AND WHO WE JUDGE TO BE MOST SYMPATHETIC AND APPROACHABLE MINISTERIAL LEVEL OFFICIAL ON THIS SENSITIVE SUBJECT. IMADI HAS BEEN BOTH FRANK AND HELPFUL IN THESE EXCHANGES, INITIATING ACTION WITH OTHER SYRIAN OFFICES WHEN HE COULD AND GIVING US BENEFIT OF HIS JUDGEMENT AS TO WHAT TRAFFIC WOULD BEAR.

4. WE HAVE NOT TO DATE HAD CONTACT WITH WORKING
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LEVEL OFFICIALS IN MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE WHO HANDLE DAILY ROUTINE OF SYRIAN BOYCOTT REGULATIONS. WHILE WE BELIEVE THEY HAVE NO POWER TO MAKE EXCEPTIONS OR INITIATE REGULATORY CHANGES, PRESUMABLY THEY WOULD BE SOURCES OF KNOWLEDGE ON PARTICULAR POINTS.

5. TO OUR KNOWLEDGE EMBASSY HAS AS MATTER OF LONG-

STANDING POLICY, HAD NO DEALINGS WITH OFFICIALS OF CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE SINCE TIME OF ITS ESTABLISHMENT. RATIONALE HAS BEEN TO DEMONSTRATE OUR NON-SUPPORT OF ARAB BOYCOTT. PRICE WE HAVE HAD TO PAY HAS BEEN TO CUT OURSELVES OFF FROM MOST AUTHORITATIVE SOURCE OF BOYCOTT INFORMATION AND ALSO TO FOREGO OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS BOYCOTT MEASURES WITH OFFICIALS MOST DIRECTLY CONCERNED IN THEIR PREPARATION AND LOBBY FOR CHANGES. NOR HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO DEVELOP RELIABLE SECONDARY SOURCES OF BOYCOTT INFORMATION IN DAMASCUS. WE HAVE THUS NOT BEEN IN POSITION TO REPLY ADEQUATELY TO INQUIRIES OF AMERICAN BUSINESS FIRMS AS TO MODUS OPERANDI AND OTHER FACTORS RELATING TO BOYCOTT.

6. ACCORDING TO WELL-CONNECTED SYRIAN BUSINESSMAN, MOHAMMAD MAHGOUB, WHO IS EGYPTIAN LAWYER CURRENTLY SERVING AS COMMISSIONER OF CENTRAL ARAB BOYCOTT OFFICE IN DAMASCUS, WILL RETIRE THIS YEAR. BUSINESSMAN DID NOT KNOW WHO HIS REPLACEMENT WOULD BE. BRITISH, WEST GERMAN, ITALIAN AND SWEDISH EMBASSY SOURCES WHO ON OCCASION HAVE HAD DIRECT DEALINGS WITH BOYCOTT OFFICE ARE IN GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT MAHGOUB'S DEPUTY EL-SAYED BAYOUMI EL-BRAKI (EGYPTIAN) IS WEAK OR UNRESPONSIVE BUT THAT SYRIAN SECOND DEPUTY HAIDAR KOUDMANI HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN CLARIFYING SPECIFIC COMPANY PROBLEMS. VOLKSWAGEN, GERMAN EMBASSY SOURCE TELLS US, HAS INSISTED THAT EMBASSY REP ACCOMPANY COMPANY REPS WHEN THEY CALL ON BOYCOTT OFFICE.

7. IF DEPT DEEMS THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR USG TO HAVE ACCESS TO MORE INFORMATION ON ARAB BOYCOTT
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AND OPERATIONS OF BOYCOTT OFFICE, AND IF SUCH INFORMATION IS NOT AVAILABLE FROM SOURCES AT OTHER POSTS, IT MIGHT BE POSSIBLE FOR EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE (COMMERCIAL-ECONOMIC SPECIALIST) TO ESTABLISH LOW-KEY CONTACTS IN CENTRAL BOYCOTT OFFICE AND SYRIAN MINISTRY OF ECONOMY AND FOREIGN TRADE FOR SOLE INITIAL PURPOSE OF COLLECTING AUTHORITATIVE INFORMATION. OCCASIONAL CONTACTS AT THIS LEVEL, WITH NO AMERICAN OFFICIAL DIRECTLY INVOLVED, WOULD NOT IN OUR VIEW UNDERMINE BASIC U.S. POLICY OF NOT RECOGNIZING ARAB BOYCOTT. ANOTHER POSSIBILITY WOULD BE FOR EMBASSY TO ASK SYRIAN LAWYER, HAZEM JAZZAR, WHO IS WELL DISPOSED TO EMBASSY AND WHILE NOT ON RETAINER HAS ASSISTED EMBASSY IN PAST ON SEVERAL LEGAL MATTERS, TO UNDER-

TAKE SIMILAR, INFORMAL EFFORTS VIS-A-VIS BOYCOTT
OFFICIALS ON OUR BEHALF. DEPT COMMENTS ON THESE
SUGGESTIONS WOULD BE APPRECIATED.
MURPHY

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